

CITY OF BELMONT  
PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2007, 7:00 PM

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at One Twin Pines Lane, City Hall Council Chambers.

1. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Parsons, Frautschi, Mayer, McKenzie, Mercer, Wozniak  
Commissioners Absent: Horton

Staff Present: Community Development Director de Melo (CDD), Senior Planner DiDonato (SP), Associate Planner Gill (AP), City Attorney Zafferano (CA), Acting Recording Secretary Tompkins (RS)

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS - None

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments) - None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4A. MINUTES OF October 16, 2007

Vice Chair Frautschi asked for the following corrections: Page 5, Item 6A, add 5th bullet point to state "Any final vote would not consider suggestions 1 or 3 for the findings." Page 6, Item 6B, last sentence of 5th bullet point to read "Mechanisms like exceptions and variances are last resort solutions," and at the 9th bullet point, the last part of the sentence should read "particularly the stacked dryer areas in B units."

MOTION: By Vice Chair Frautschi, seconded by Commissioner Wozniak, to accept the Minutes of October 16, 2007, with the changes to pages 5 and 6 as noted above.

Ayes: Frautschi, Wozniak, Mayer, McKenzie, Mercer, Parsons

Noes: None

Absent: Horton

Motion passed 6/0/1

4B. RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR CHRISTINE WOZNIAK

CDD de Melo thanked Commissioner Wozniak for her many years of hard work for the Planning Commission and read the Resolution of Appreciation for her outstanding public service. He added that it will be framed and presented to her at a later date.

Vice Chair Frautschi presented a gift to Christine Wozniak, and Commissioners McKenzie and Chair Parsons expressed their thanks and wished her well as a member of the City Council.

MOTION: By Vice Chair Frautschi, seconded by Commissioner McKenzie, to adopt the Resolution of Appreciation for Outstanding Public Service Rendered by Christine Wozniak as a Member of the Planning Commission of the City of Belmont.

Motion passed 5/0/1/1 by voice vote, with Commissioner Wozniak abstaining and Commissioner Horton absent.

Commissioner Wozniak expressed the appreciation she held for working with staff and her fellow Commissioners, adding that she will be able to take all that she has learned from everybody with her to her work on the City Council.

## 5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

### 5A. PUBLIC HEARING -2932 SAN JUAN BOULEVARD

Single-Family Design Review to consider construction of a new two-story, 2275 square-foot house, which is below the maximum allowed 2749 square feet for this site.

(Appl. No. PA2006-0041)

APN: 043-173-330

ZONING: R-1B Single Family Residential

CEQA Status: Recommended Categorical Exemption per Section 15303(a)

Applicant/Owner: Brian and Jennifer Hill

Planner: Leslie Hopper – 650-759-4391

CDD de Melo summarized the Staff Report, recommending approval. He noted that since distribution of the report staff had received a letter expressing concerns about the drainage swale in the rear of the property. He stated that no construction is proposed within the swale. He answered questions from the Commission, explaining the parking requirements and lot configuration and ownership.

Brian Hill, owner/applicant, gave background on his family's planning for the project, and confirmed that the Public Hearing notices had been mailed to the 300' neighbors, some of whom attended his open house. He added that the Department of Fish and Game informed him that he was not to disturb the vegetation in the creek and that he should stay 10' away from the lip of the creek. If something washed into the creek he would pull it out, like he has for the past 50 years. Referring to the arborist's report, they came to a verbal agreement as to alternative methods of protecting the trees. The arborist had 20' circles around the trees, which would not allow his parents to get in and out of their driveway, so they decided to put a fence down the property line so that everything that happens on his lot stays on his lot and cannot carry over to the other lot.

Chair Parsons opened the Public Hearing.

Glenn Morgan, resident of San Juan Blvd., referred to Page 5 of the staff report where it states that "the area north of the swale will be left in its natural state." He stated that he has chosen to keep the swale in a natural state, as have the Hills. They had flooding in 1980 and 1981 and it is a sensitive issue about what is natural and what is not and they try to keep the sides flowing as best as possible. That is their only real concern.

MOTION: By Vice Chair Frautschi, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed 6/0/1 by voice vote.

Commissioner Wozniak liked the project, adding that she felt that they need to determine the best solution for maintaining the swale in the back.

Commissioner Mayer believed the project will remove a terrible eyesore from this neighborhood and was glad to see that it will go ahead. He felt that the roofline on the second floor was a little massive and wanted to see an irrigation plan..

Vice Chair Frautschi liked the design. He was somewhat bothered by the straightness of the second floor but felt that the three huge trees at the front of the property helped mitigate the bulk. He commented that they will only be able to locate their bed in one place because of the configuration of the bedroom, and that the stairs could have been put in a different place to allow more space in the living room. He liked the

landscape plan and colors and felt it would be a real addition to what appears to him to be a little hole on San Juan.

Commissioner Mercer concurred that it is not her favorite floor plan but appreciated that the house is very sensitive to its setting – woodsy, not built out to the maximum possible square footage and used minimal hardscape. She felt it was important that they craft a condition for on-going maintenance.

Commissioner McKenzie especially liked the exterior design. He too did not like the interior design and suggested that the house would be more comfortable with 3 bedrooms instead of 4, with every room a little bigger than presently shown.

Chair Parsons felt it is a good project for the neighborhood and liked the fact that they are not destroying the landscaping. His only concern was that they add a condition regarding continuing maintenance of the swale in terms of keeping it clear of debris, and would like to see a Landscape Plan with irrigation system attached.

CDD de Melo recommended that Condition I.A.11. on page 7 of the Conditions of Approval be amended to read as follows: "No fill, debris, waste or construction materials shall be deposited or discharged into the drainage channel. The property owner shall maintain the drainage channel subject to the requirements of the applicable State and Federal Agencies."

MOTION: By Commissioner Mayer, seconded by Commissioner Wozniak, adopting the Resolution approving a Single-Family Design Review for 2932 San Juan Boulevard (Appl. No. 2006-0041) with the added condition that was just recited regarding maintenance of the swale and the return of an irrigation plan to staff for approval.

Ayes: Mayer, Wozniak, Mercer, McKenzie, Frautschi, Parsons

Noes: None

Absent: Horton

Motion passed 6/0/1

Chair Parsons noted that this item may be appealed to the City Council within 10 calendar days.

## 6. STUDY SESSION:

### 6A. Review of Draft Interim Residential Design Guidelines

SP DiDonato summarized the staff Memorandum, noting that the intent of the document is to assist applicants in preparing plans for design review submittals. Staff also anticipates that the interim guidelines could be used as a baseline for the consultant that they hire to assist the City in preparing final Design Guidelines for the City. Staff was seeking advice and guidance of the Commission on the content, layout and format of the Design Guidelines.

Commissioner Wozniak commented that it was very well put together, contained a large amount of information and that SP DiDonato did a great job.

CDD de Melo was excited about where they are at this point, commending SP DiDonato and adding that it will assist planners in conveying the concepts to the general public when they are considering either an addition or a new home.

Chair Parsons was also impressed, adding that it would be useful to add a graphic that illustrates that you do not build a house on a hillside and try to make it a flat lot house, thereby avoiding a lot of cut and fill, and that more information in the landscape area could be included. He would like to see a similar document as a minimum guide made available as quickly as possible.

Commissioner McKenzie echoed that it was excellent work and that it followed the process that they go through every two weeks. He felt the City would be much more beautiful if only they would have had this document a year or so ago.

Commissioner Mercer concurred that it was excellent work. She had made some editorial comments on her copy and would share it with SP DiDonato after the meeting. She had two general inputs: 1) She preferred the terms "undesirable" and "desirable" with the undesirable view always shown first and both of them always labeled so that anyone who does not have any design sense will understand the difference. 2) Her general criticism throughout was that some of the language is vague or obtuse and should be stated in very straightforward, grade school English so that it is clearer to an outsider. For example what it means to "mitigate bulk," how to "balance factors," and to use the word "smaller" rather than "minimized."

Vice Chair Frautschi stated that he wished he had had this document when he started as a Planning Commissioner, and believed it will be a real help to people who approach Permit Center. He took the opportunity to thank staff for the recent neighborhood first-time builder seminar, adding that he thought it should be a requirement that all Planning Commissioners attend that at least one time.

Commissioner Mayer concurred with Vice Chair Frautschi, adding that it solved a number of mysterious concepts for him, bulk being the one that he always had the most difficulty with. His one concern was with the concept of conformity with everything in the neighborhood; that it discourages originality in design. He thought the examples could perhaps show a little more realistically what neighborhoods are really like instead of like tract home neighborhoods. Other than that, he felt that it is a tremendously useful document.

Commissioner Wozniak felt that in general the document could be personalized a bit more for Belmont – that it could start off by saying what the 3 or 4 things are that one could do that would guarantee success. For example, look at the neighborhood, get an architect or builder who is familiar with Belmont, discuss the issue of public vs. private views in Belmont, and the problems with deer and gophers. She also thought the list of different house styles was kind of a laundry list and suggested it might be good to say what percentage of house in Belmont are of each style. To Commissioner Mayer's point, she felt that what they are trying to do is prevent people from going to a neighborhood with one-story houses and build to the max, or building on a hillside so that it follows all of our guidelines but when you stand in front of it, it feels like it is going to fall on you.

Chair Parsons' major concern was omission of the hillside issue and possibly more on landscaping.

Mike Carter, resident of Continentals Way, addressed the Commission speaking as a former green builder. He generally agreed with the draft guidelines, but felt that the document gives lip service to the mixed eclectic visual character of some neighborhoods while all the graphics emphasize conformity of design. If a property owner comes to the planning process with a unique, tasteful, quality building that will enhance the property values of the neighborhood and a Planner or the Commission rejects the design solely on the issue of consistency, he felt that the property owner should be allowed to secure approval with the signature of 90% of the homeowners that are to be determined by staff to be the most affected by the structure. He concluded that Belmont has sufficient examples of monotonous uniformity in its housing stock and asked that they not institutionalize it.

Commissioner McKenzie suggested that reference to colors and choice of materials should be considered. CDD de Melo noted that the Downtown Specific Plan plays deference to extreme colors and that could be included in this document. Chair Parsons suggested using some pictures of good examples in the back.

Commissioner Wozniak liked the idea of using positive pictures of all kinds of different styles that are approved. She added that a lot of problems are a result of people thinking they can do it themselves and they should know that they need something behind the technology.

Commissioner Mercer thought that Mr. Carter's comments pointed out that those who are close to this document read it differently than the public will. She said that she is open to all kinds of new designs and it never occurred to her that the document reinforces conformity; she thought it would be a good idea if, after SP DiDonato finishes incorporating all the ideas received at this meeting, he could run it by some people who are not Planning Commissioners and are not close to this process for their opinions. CDD de Melo

concurred, adding that they plan to hold some sort of neighborhood outreach meeting next summer to solicit the opinions of others in the community.

Chair Parsons asked that, after some reasonable editing based on the comments received, they label it "interim" and make it available at the front counter as soon as possible. CDD deMelo agreed to this suggestion.

Commissioner Mayer commented that the Downtown Specific Plan has always bothered him because it is so constrictive. He hoped that the Commission can have some confidence that there is no obstacle if a project meets all of the basic criteria but is a somewhat radical architectural design. They do not want tract neighborhoods—most of the neighborhoods are varied in architecture and we want to keep it that way. He would like some of the examples to show a little more variety and maybe a statement somewhere that similarity or uniformity does not mean total conformity—that there is freedom for some originality in design. CDD de Melo suggested that they could do a wholesale review of the DTSP and take the good parts of that and apply them from a residential standpoint as part of the design guidelines. He understands that the Commission does not want to stifle the originality aspect of a good architectural design in the hopes of just having a cookie cutter consistent profile for a neighborhood.

## 7. REPORTS, STUDIES AND UPDATES

CDD de Melo reported as follows:

### 7A. 500 Block – El Camino Real (East Side)

There has been some tree removal along this block – staff is looking into next steps in terms of addressing how to deal with the property owner.

### 7B. Motel 6 – 1101 Shoreway Road

Nothing new to report. A January meeting is scheduled to follow up with the security detail.

### 7C. 2996 Hallmark Drive

This corner property is all cleaned up and nicely maintained. Commissioner Mercer commented that, as a thank you to that homeowner, that single property cleanup now improves the image and raised the value of every single property in Belmont. Chair Parsons mentioned that he saw people waiting for a bus standing in the landscaping again, he assumes because they are so close to the street. He had talked to Public Works about possibly putting a bench there if they cannot get the bus company to do something. This item can be removed from the follow-up list.

### 7D. NDN (Koret) Athletic Field

They are still grappling with a next Task Force meeting, hoping to get one in before the 1/15 Planning Commission meeting. The City is evaluating the acoustics study that has been released.

Reminder that the last meeting of the year is December 18 and encouraged Commissioner to come in to the office to look at a model of one of the properties to be discussed. January 1st meeting is cancelled. City Hall offices closed 12/24 through 1/1.

Chair Parsons asked staff to investigate a tree that was cut down in front of the property next to the gas station on Old County Road at Ralston Avenue .

Commissioner McKenzie asked about a Redwood tree that the City cut down in the entrance to College View Way Park. Vice Chair Frautschi responded that Interim Parks & Recreation Co-Director Ourtiague had sent an email reporting that the root system had totally grown off the City property and had undermined the foundation and removed the entire pavement in the garage of the neighboring home. CDD de Melo agreed to forward the email to the Commission.

## 8. CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2007

Liaison: Commissioner Horton

Alternate Liaison: Commissioner McKenzie

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m. to a Regular Planning Commission Meeting on Tuesday, December 18, at 7:00 p.m. in Belmont City Hall.

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Carlos de Melo  
Planning Commission Secretary

CD's of Planning Commission Meetings are available in the  
Community Development Department.

Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment.